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Interviewee: Delma Welch

Interviewer: Debbie Gable

Date of Interview: March 22, 2015

Location of Interview: York, Pennsylvania

Transcriber: Sara Tyberg

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Abstract:

Delma Welch was born in Washington D.C. and grew up in Cardiff, Maryland as a Catholic with her three brothers and one sister. Delma began going to NOW [National Organization for Women] meetings in 1975 after becoming interested in feminism from an early age. After being in a relationship with a man for 23 years, she met her future wife at the YWCA and ended her marriage. Originally a stay at home mother, Delma has since held several jobs throughout her life, including her current position at the Margaret Moul Home. Today, she lives in York, Pennsylvania with her partner of 25 years, Peg Welch. In this interview, Delma discusses her involvement in many civil rights organizations and marches starting in the 70s, issues with coming out to her family, and marriage to Peg—once in Canada and once more in Pennsylvania, when gay marriage became legalized in the state. She also briefly expresses the importance of lesbian and woman-only spaces and her positive experiences dealing with the legal system as a lesbian woman in a same-sex relationship.

DG: This is an interview for the LGBT History Project of Central Pennsylvania. I am Debbie Gable, the interviewer, and this is Delma Welch, the narrator. The date is March 22, 2015, and we're in York, Pennsylvania. Delma, do I have your permission to record the interview?

DW: Yes.

DG: Hence the microphone and everything.

DW: Yes.

DG: Okay. [laughs] All right, so let's get started. Can you just talk to me a little bit about when you were born and a little bit about your childhood and where you grew up?

DW: Well, I was born in Washington, D.C., and our—our family moved up to Cardiff, Maryland when I was three, so I had no chance to make any political inroads in Washington, but... So, we lived in Cardiff [Maryland], which is a very small town, and I have two older brothers and a younger sister and a much younger brother, and growing up—I grew up Catholic, and the church we went to was literally about a hundred yards from our house, and... So, we had all kinds of—when I was growing up we had a big yard, and we played baseball and we played different things in our yards and kids would come up, and we'd just would play. It wasn't boys playing and girls playing, it was everybody's playing. And, so then my two older brothers got into, you know, the Little League, and that was the first—the first sign that something was not right. Why couldn't girls be in the Little League? It was just the boys. They got uniforms and, you know, they had a schedule and, you know, people in the community went to watch them and all that, you know,

and... So that was my first... And then when I was—like I say, I grew up Catholic, and... I taught this Sunday school class, and they were—I would say they were third-graders, and I was, you know, starting to be—really understand about feminism and women’s rights and stuff, and I asked them what they wanted to be when they grew up, and the boys just—one after another after another, all these different occupations. It was interesting that not one single boy said father. The girls said mother, teacher, nurse, and Avon lady. And I was just... and it took—it must’ve been 10 or 12 girls in the class, and it took all of them to come up with four different occupations. So, you know, that was wrenching. And... I knew... at... I knew pretty early that—that—we didn’t have the word lesbian—well, I guess it was in the dictionary but we didn’t know it, and—but I knew that I liked—I liked girls, I liked women. But, you know, I just didn’t—it didn’t come all together exactly what that meant, and... I played on sports teams. I played basketball and field hockey and... So it was growing up, I was in a lot of things. My sister and I were in—we took tap dancing lessons and we took baton lessons, and I mean, we were poor, but our parents managed to get this, you know. We took piano lessons... So it was a good experience. Swimming lessons at eight o’ clock in the morning and the water was freezing, freezing cold. But... Anyway, you know, I went through... we had a one through six. We didn’t have kindergarten then, and then we went to the high school, which was actually seven through twelve, and that was a really good experience, because you got to see kids older than you, you know, and... So we got to see the girls play basketball on the teams, and the girls play field hockey, and it was like—that was when you were in seventh grade, and “Oh man, they got uniforms, and this is cool,” you know? So, I was active in all that kind of stuff. And then—then I met Bob, my husband on a blind date. Friends knew friends and we got married, and we have three daughters and... I—then I—the first time I went to a NOW [National Organization for Women] meeting was—I had seen something in the newspaper about a women’s basketball team, and I was trying to find out about it and here somebody told me that this woman that belonged to the local NOW chapter was this woman basketball player. So, I joined the NOW chapter, and I actually I never get—get to meet her, I don’t know what that—what happened there, but... So I started going to NOW meetings, and I went to NOW meetings. My first NOW meeting was in 1975 and I was pregnant with my youngest daughter.

DG: So, how long had you been married at that point?

DW: Well, I got married in ‘68.

DG: Okay.

DW: So, I had Jennifer and Jean—were three years apart, and then... then Les, and... So, I went to NOW meetings. They had them at the YW[CA], and at the time I lived in Airville [Pennsylvania], which is the end of the earth and you turn left, but so it was exciting to come to the big city, you know, and so I got involved. I was not working outside the home. I was fortunate enough to be able to do that, and...

DG: Can you explain what NOW is, please?

DW: Oh, the National Organization for Women, and it was started in ‘66 and I believe the York chapter started in ‘68, and they were very active. They were—at the time, they were... It was a

woman running for something and the NOW chapter had a big reception for her, and that was the first kind of political thing that I had ever been involved in, and—this is—this is—I like this, you know?

DG: So it caught your interest based on a basketball player?

DW: Yeah.

DG: Okay. And then—and then you got interested in the—in the political activism they were doing?

DW: Right, right. I mean, I could only—I mean, I always knew that it was, you know, like... like, you know, Peg said, it was “Help Wanted: Men,” and “Help Wanted: Women,” and I would go to the meetings and because I was able—was free during the day, I was able to do things that other women couldn’t, and I remember Nancy Morris kinda took me under her wing and we would go—the Equal Rights Amendment was the big thing then, and we were speaking to groups about that and I thought, “Well, I’ve never gotten up in front of a group,” but I thought if—if I don’t do it, it won’t get done, so I just did it, and... So then, you know, you became more educated about the issues and stuff, and then I started going to -- Pennsylvania NOW had meetings like every other month and I would go there, and so then I learned more about state politics and I—we went up to Harrisburg and lobbied on—it was a divorce reform bill and we went up, and we went to all the representatives in York and they all said the same thing. They said, “Oh, we got a lot of mail about that.” Then we’d go to the next one. “Oh, yeah, yeah, we got a lot of mail about that.” And one of the representatives we went in—they were all white men—said, “Oh yeah, we—we got a lot,” he reaches over—the stack was this tall [holds up pinched fingers] and we’re—we’re looking at each other like, this is what they mean. And when we came back to the meeting, we said, you know, we went up there and we lobbied, and we said, they all got—they all said they got a lot of mail, and we said, “How many letters do you think they got?” And virtually everyone said, “Oh, hundred, hundred and fifty.” We said, “Oh no. They got a dozen. And that’s a big deal.” Which was an eye-opener for all of us that, you know, you think that your letter or your phone call doesn’t matter, doesn’t—you know, it’s lost—no, no, no, no, no. It’s almost kind of empowering. And ‘course I got to know about lesbian rights through NOW.

DG: Okay.

DW: And there was—there was marches... ’80—1987, I think, was a march on Washington on lesbian and gay rights, and I went to that, you know. We had a bus going down and we had buses that went for the Equal Rights Amendment, and I was even able to volunteer down at the National NOW Action Center, it was called. I would drive down to Washington and drive back home the same day, and then I was—I did that for years. Not all the time, but just when I could, and I stayed with Molly Yard who was one of the presidents and longtime activist. She was something, and I would stay with her so I could stay more than just one day, and... so I got more involved in kind of knowing about the issues and—and working on the issues, and then it was kind of coming out to myself and, you know, that was—‘course I jokingly say I’m a recovering Catholic, but the Catholic—you know, the Catholic church is pretty hard on lesbian and gay

men, but... I had gone to church, you know, throughout my life, and they used to have this bulletin and it would have—on the outside it would be some generic thing, but on the inside it would be about, you know, whatever's going on in your local church. Well, the thing on the outside was about condemning homosexuality and that was the last time I went to church, and I thought, "This isn't right. This isn't right," and... I guess the coming out to me part of it was, you know, was—was challenging, and my husband, Bob, was a—he was a good man, and I, you know, I came out to him, and he was understanding. And... So as, you know, the years went by and I was, you know, active, and my kids were growing up and, you know, I did more things. I went to a couple of national conferences. I went—they had an international women's year convention and a conference, and I went to that in Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania]. That was so exciting. It was so many—I mean, at—one night, when we had the Equal Rights Amendment march in '79, [finalizer's note: one ERA march was in 1978. There was an Alice Paul Memorial March on August 26, 1977 a few months after she died.] Alice Paul [transcriber's note: ...Delma might have misremembered or misspoken the year of the march] was there. She was elderly.

DG: Talk about who Alice Paul...?

DW: Well, Alice Paul is the—one of the women that worked for suffrage who spent her whole life, you know, working for suffrage and then she worked for the Equal Rights Amendment and never lived to see it passed. [Finalizer's note: she never did see it pass: it never passed] So there was always kind of this sense of history and, you know, all of that.

DG: Can I ask a question? So, you're describing being married and living in a—in a rural area?

DW: Yeah, oh yeah.

DG: I'm curious about what—what did your husband as well as your friends in the community think about your activism in—in the things you were involved in?

DW: Bob was supportive. I mean, he was—he's deceased, but he was always supportive of me and supportive of that cause. He was—he was an only child and he was brought up by his mother and his aunt and his grandmother. He had a lot of influence from women all his life, and it just seemed to him that it was just an issue of fairness that, you know, people could get the same chances and so forth, and so yeah, he was—he was supportive.

DG: Were there other women in your community that were involved in those kind of...?

DW: Not so much in Airville [Pennsylvania]. I can't say there was a, you know, klatch of—I'm not sure what the word is—but of women who were—but... So I would say my friends were NOW women and women that I met, like, through the YW or, you know, other groups. We—NOW was—at that time, was more involved—because of the Equal Rights Amendment, was more involved with, like, AAUW [American Association of University Women] and League of Woman Voters and, you know, voter registration and all kinds of things, so I got to meet a lot of women that were involved, you know, like that, so...

DW: And AAUW is American Association of University Women?

DG: American Association of University Women, yeah, yeah. And... So yeah, that was—that was important that I, you know, could just see women of all ages that, you know, supported women's rights and stood up for it and... And then when... There was the—there was the Lesbian Alliance and a group with men and women. I got involved with that through Cindy Mitzel and— 'cause she was a member of NOW, and became active in that, and one of the things we did was we did was, we did these shows called Judy—for Judy Garland, a gay icon, and we did these different shows. We did one at—at the YW, we did one at the York Little Theater, and we even got up there on stage and did this kind of dia—monologue or something. That was terrifying but it was fun at the same time, and we raised money for AIDS. That was the main thing, and that was the group that I would say did the most—that lesbian and gay men worked together and, you know, it was—it was good. And—and we went to—there was these women's festivals, there was Sister Space, and there was... one was... Camp—Camp... Anyway, it was two of 'em, and I had gone to several, and then when Peg and I got together we went Sister Space, and we went there and that was quite an experience because it was hundreds of women on this huge campground, and it was all women, and, you know, we had entertainment and it was vending areas and... It was something. It was really something. And so, like the potlucks that we had here, and... It was very important to have the next potluck, so when you were at the potluck somebody needed to step up and say, you know, I'll have the next one, 'cause otherwise it just—it didn't go.

DG: Let me back you up just for a minute. So you were talking about being married to Bob, and you said that you came out to him and that he was understanding. So you stayed together then, at that point?

DW: Yes, yes, yes. We got married in 1968, and then when Peg and I—we were married until Peg and I got together. I mean, we got legally divorced like a year later or something, but, yeah.

DG: So how long had you been married to Bob?

DW: I'd have to do the math in my head, but...

DG: You can ballpark it.

DW: Okay. [laughs] I think 23 years.

DG: Okay, okay.

DW: 'Cause I'm thinking that now—now Peg and I have been together more than—our relationship is longer than the relationship that I had with Bob.

DG: Okay, okay. So you came out to him and that was just sharing with him this sense of being attracted to women, or did you have language for it at that point in your life? Did you label yourself as a lesbian or how did you...?

DW: Well, I don't think I did at first, but then, you know, as—as it went along, I did. Yeah, yeah.

DG: Okay. So how did you meet Peg?

DW: Well, I met Peg at the YW, and I had been in a consciousness raising group, which is a group of women early on that would meet—it was usually like eight or ten women, and I think we got together through NOW and we would meet weekly or every other week, and just there was a whole thing that NOW put out about consciousness raising, and—about different issues, and we would talk about that, and Helen was in the group I was in. And...

DG: And who is Helen?

DW: Helen Groft. Then, she was the head of the YWCA. So, we got to be, you know, good friends, and so then she—I came on to the Y as a massage therapist in '86, and then—then, you know, there was this consciousness raising group, and there was this political activism and things going on in York [Pennsylvania] and stuff, so you know, I would see, you know, Helen kind of often, and anyway, then when she got the job at the YW, of course I was there, and so we were, you know, talking, and she says, “Oh, there's this wonderful woman that's gonna come in, and she's gonna be in this new job. And she said, you'll just love her.” And [giggles]—and well, that's what—that's how it all turned out, you know. I met her. They had this annual dinner and it happened to be that she was going to start the next week, but Helen had asked her to come to this meeting, and I remember seeing her and, you know, was introduced, and I thought she was really nice, and... And then, I was at—being a massage therapist, I wasn't there every day, but then, you know, I would just, you know, I would see Peg in her office, and we would talk, and we got to be friends. Then, we would escort over a Planned—over at Hillcrest for abortion, and we would escort the women that would go in, and so Peg was doing this and I was doing this. And, so that was in Saturday mornings, and so after we were done, you know, people would just, you know, go home and I went to Central Market, and I saw Peg, and she was just—she was just in jeans and casual clothes, and I said, “Oh, gee, I don't know that I recognize you when you're not in your dress for success clothes,” you know, kidding her, and she said, “This is who I really am.” You know, this is... And so then, so then she invited me up to her house, and she had a new—you know, Shane was just a year old, and...

DG: Her grandson?

DW: Her grandson, yeah. So I went up, and we just talked and talked, and we just started being closer, and I remember that she went—she had jury duty and she was—it was like a whole week, and so she would have time for lunch, and... so, I said, I'll make us a picnic, and we had a picnic down here at Albemarle Park in the band stand, and—and it just got to be fairly obvious that we were attracted to each other and that—that something was going on. And, you know, before you knew it, we were together and... you know, it was—you know, I had to tell my—I had to tell Bob, and I had to tell the kids and, you know, that was hard. That was very hard. And... But it was real clear that we—we had to be together. It wasn't any—it was just—we needed to be together, and... [sighs] Now at the time, my father had passed away, and—and my mother who was—you know, grew up in Baltimore [Maryland], and she was Catholic. My father was—had

been—his family was all Catholic, and so when I went to tell her, now Peg and I had this whole thing about we were going—now, this is back in 1990, so, we had this whole thing about now... you know, people would tell us stories about—they would—they would throw their kids out, or they would just get angry or have a heart attack or—you know, so we're like planning out, you know: what if this happens? What if that happens? Or—the whole thing. So, my brother lived right down the street from my mother, and I—I talked to him, and I said, "Why don't you come up about a half hour after I'm there?" I said, "Because if we both come at the same time, she's going to immediately know something—something is up." So, he said ok. So, I—I'm telling my mother this, and she has met Peg. And I tell my mother, and I see her—like, she's in a chair like this, and I see her, like, sliding down the more I tell her, like, she's getting this, you know, and so I just didn't know what to expect and she said, "I don't—I just don't know," and that kind of thing and she said like, all these things we had thought, you know, she might say. She said, "Well, did you leave the house clean for Bob and the kids?" And I said, "No, but they'll manage." [smiles] And my brother came in and he was really good. He was talking about his oldest daughter who had—had moved out in the Midwest, and she had all these tattoos way before tattoos were ever "in," and she had them all over her back and he said, you know, people would say things about her, and he'd say to them, "That's her life. That's her life. She's a good person. That's her life," and that's what he told my mother. So, then, I ask her if she would—her birthday was not too far away from that, and my sister always had a big party at her place, and I said, you know, "I'm gonna bring Peg," and my mother said, "Well, I'm not sure I'm ready for that." And I said, "Well, I can't come unless Peg comes." So... we had even talked about like, her and I—my mother and I going to counseling and kinda talking it over, and so my—this might have been even less than a week after this, and my sister was like, reluctant. That's being generous. Reluctant to have Peg come, and Peg said, "We're just going. What are they going to do? They're not going to be impolite." And, so we went, and you know, we had cousins there, and you know, it was kind of a big deal. Always a big deal. And, we had crabs. That was the big thing—crabs and shrimp. 'Course my mother grew up in Baltimore, so they were big on crabs and stuff. So we were sitting around on this picnic table, and Peg was—my mother was showing Peg how to do the—do the crabs, you know, showing her right there and then, my mother went in to the house to get something and she leaned over and put her arm on—her hand on Peg's shoulder and said, "Would you like anything?" So, it was like, you know... So, that was... then my mother and Peg—my mother played pinochle. She was very big on pinochle, and Peg knows how to play. I sort of half know how to play, but we used to go down there and play cards with her and you know, she got to be very accepting.

DG: That's nice.

DW: Mhm.

DG: So you started to talk a little bit about some of the groups you were involved with. You mentioned the Lesbian Alliance? Can you talk more about that?

DW: Well, that was a group of women who had been with the group where the men and women were and they would just—I mean, I think people get the misconception that gay men and lesbians have a lot in common. No, they don't. No, they don't. It is two different worlds, and we just felt like it—we needed our own space and you know, our issues and stuff like that, so... We

even talked about—now, this would have been in the early ‘90s—whether we could use the word lesbian. That was even—that was even too far out, but then we said, well, what’s the point if we don’t have lesbian in it? So that’s what we did, and we had—I guess it was more like gatherings and coming out thing that we put in the paper, and we also had a woman that—from Lititz [Pennsylvania] that is a financial planner and she’s a lesbian, and she—a couple times, she came here and women came that, you know, she kinda gave a primer on financial, you know, things and that was very helpful, and I think we just had a lot of—in all of these groups, I think we just had a lot of getting together, and like Peg said about the—the space that, you know, you could go there and everybody was a lesbian and everybody was, you know... It was—it was nice. It was nice. And it just seems like it’s harder to do that—much harder to do that now, because things have progressed, but it’s nice when—when lesbians can just get together and do things, and you know, we’ve all shared the same experiences.

DG: You’ve mentioned the show—the Judy Judy show that was a fundraiser for AIDS. Is there anything else about the time of the AIDS crisis that you remember?

DW: Oh, well, yes. We went down to see the quilt at—on the National Mall, and all that was heartbreaking. It was part of the march, where we got married in front of the IRS... They had all the—these patches of quilts. They even had ‘em at Penn State in York [Pennsylvania]. They had—it was traveling, and they would go to different—I guess mostly colleges, and we went over for that and they was—they were—they would try to get the squares that were from that particular—when the person was from that particular area.

DG: So usually family members made the panels, right? As a—like a commemoration for someone’s life who had passed from AIDS.

DW: Yeah, yeah. Right. And they were all pretty much, you know, [holds up hands] about that big, that wide, and quite a—quite a collection of imagination and you know, some were just, you know, the picture of the person and the dates and this and that, but some of them were pretty. There was mementos on ‘em and they were very certainly individualized, and I can remember that—that march for lesbian and gay rights because I had been to the equal rights one. I had been to the pro-choice, the abortion rights, all of those, and the first ERA—that was a hundred thousand people there, and the lesbian and gay march, they said there was over a million.

DG: Wow. What year was that?

DW: That was ‘93, and I believe it, because having been to the other marches and seeing—I mean, you would get down on the metro and you couldn’t move. There was so many people there, you—they had extra trains and all this, and it was just jam-packed, you know. And there’s—I think it’s called metro center, and it’s where the North, East, South, and West intersect, and it’s a huge, huge metro stop, and the parents and friends of lesbians and gays, PFLAG, always would meet when there was something going on and so they met before this march, and we were there with our signs and stuff and we saw all these PFLAG people coming down the steps and the escalators and they all had signs, and... It was just—it was an incredible moment. It was just—everybody cheered. I mean, we had taken over the entire metro and we were cheering. They were cheering us, and we were cheering them. You know, that was—that

was something. So, I—you know, when you think about this kind of stuff, and I've been to all those marches and, you know, I have some pictures, and I wish I had taken, you know, better notes and better, you know, recollections of all what happened because it was—I mean, you were part of history.

DG: Yeah.

DW: You sort of think of, like, you know, we learned about the suffrage movement and all that, but I don't think we really thought so much that we were a part of history. We were just as a much a part of history as they were when they marched in front of the White House and when they, you know, lobbied and did all that stuff. I mean, that's what we did. We lobbied legislators, and... You know, you—you would just see, like, when you went up to Harrisburg or you went up... I—I was, when they had the hearings for the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress in the House, we went down, and the room was pretty big, and—but you could only go in for like, 15 minutes, because there was so many people that wanted to get in to be—to see it—to be a part of it, you know, like they were debating it, and... I mean, some of the—the anti-groups, like, we would all have to use the same toilets and, you know, just ridiculous. I mean, it's like the arguments that they gave for the suffrage movement that women wouldn't be women if they could vote and...

DG: Right. It may be bad for their health, the burden...

DW: Yes, yes. I mean, just beyond. Beyond. But, so yeah, to see that—to see that, like we—for the Equal Rights Amendment, we marched. We wore white, because that's what the suffrage—and then we had the sashes that—like they had, and you think, how in the world did they, you know, they didn't have—they didn't have phones. I mean, they didn't—I mean, it was just kind of amazing how they could get people together and—and like, we joke in the NOW chapter that the only difference between when I first became a member in '75 and now, is that we use computers for the newsletter instead of typing it out, but it's the same issues. We're working on the—we're working on the same issues, so, yeah, it's been... I mean, when I think about it that might—my youngest daughter will be 40 in September, so I've been active in the women's movement for 40 years. Although I certainly considered myself a feminist way before that, but like, 40 years, holy cow.

DG: Where does the Equal Rights Amendment stand now?

DW: Well yeah, I mean, they're still trying to get it. They were three states short, and they never had a deadline for—they had an extension for the ERA, and—but that was only for seven years. They've never had that for any other amendment. So, now they're trying again, and it just—and when we were marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade, and there was a—a woman who was the president of Ireland in 1990 and you think, oh my god. Oh my god. I'd like to live long enough to see a woman president.

DG: For the United States, right?

DW: Yeah, yeah.

DG: What do you think about the progress around same-sex marriage rights?

DW: Oh, it's exciting. Holy cow. I mean, we just never thought—I mean, people were saying, maybe 15 years ago about marriage, and we just thought it was out of the realm of possibilities, not even in our hemisphere or stratosphere, and then when it just—when it started happening, and then when it—when it—when that—when it happened here, when it happened in Norristown [Pennsylvania] like, holy cow. It was just like, man, this guy's got the guts, you know. He's an attorney, and he's looking at the Constitution saying, "How in the world did they pass anti-gay stuff in the first place?" and...

DG: And the man you're talking about was—I forget his position... Recorder of Deeds?

DW: Register of Wills, I think.

DG: Oh, okay. Register of Wills. Okay, in Norristown [Pennsylvania]. Mhm.

DW: And we went down there, and it was—when we had gone to Canada, we went to the lawyer's office first to get the papers, and then there was—we said—well, the taxi brought us from the airport and we said to the driver, you know, "Should we just have you wait here and, you know, we're going to the courthouse." And he said, "Oh no, you can ride the streetcar, it's right up the street here, you go in this little store and get a ticket." So, that's what we did, and we got on. And of course, I'm telling everybody we're gonna get married, you know, so they're all very nice—very nice, you know, "Congratulations!" and "We see a lot of people from the United States come up here!" and so then, they said, "Oh, the courthouse is just up the street. Not far," you know. So we went a few blocks, and then all these people got off, and there was this very ornate building. So we get off, and we go up, and there's security and stuff, and we—they asked us what we were there for, and we said, "Well, we're—we're getting married when we get the marriage license," and he said "Oh, this—this is not the right one, this is for criminals. It's the next one up" So, so we got up—so we got back on the thing, and here it was only like a block, but we didn't know that. It's a brand new building and they were having a big fair there, and so we knew we had time. We walked through the fair a little bit, and then we went and got our license and everyone was so nice. And then when we got—when we went to Norristown, we pull up and we're parking on the street, and we go up to this ornate building, and we go up and we say, "Oh, we're here for a marriage license!" They said, "No. This is the wrong place. This is for criminals." [laughs]

DG: [laughs] And how many years apart were these two experiences?

DW: Yeah, that was like ten years or nine years apart. So, here—

DG: So, you had gone to Canada to get married when it was legal there but not legal in the United States yet? Okay, so, all right.

DW: Correct, correct, correct. So then when we get to Norristown here, it's—we were parked on the correct side but we just didn't know it because the building looked kind of innocuous, but

they were doing some construction on—on it or something, but it was the right building, so... And this reporter asked us from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and then he followed us through. He was sitting behind the—the clerk that was doing all the paperwork and sign it and everything, and then when we went out, he followed us down the steps to our car, you know, and then I went—the next day, I went and I'm looking for the paper, and here we were in the paper. Like, holy cow. Now, we have those—we have those papers somewhere. Well, the articles from the paper, but... And people were—like, I'd been—I work at the Margaret Moul Home, I've been there for 14 years and... people were just—they knew I—Peg and I were together, and they were very happy for me when we got married, and—and one thing—when I—before I went to Margaret Moul Home, I worked down in Shrewsbury [Township], and we had decided that we wanted—wanted our last names to be the same, so we—my birth name was Welch, and Peg's birth name was Powell, and we talked about one of those or a whole different one and then we settled on Welch, so we changed our—had our names—well, all I had to—I just had to—because I was divorced, I could just sign a paper but she had to go through this changing name thing and put it in the newspaper, like in case they think you're trying to commit fraud by changing your name and—and then you had to go—she had to go before a judge to explain, you know, and then he had to—so it's kind of a big deal, you have to—

DG: So, it's up to the judge to decide if it's like, a good enough reason, or?

DW: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Ok.

DW: Yeah, and the judge just said, "Well, if you were all this—this uncomplicated, I would be in good shape." So, it was no—you know, he didn't say—he didn't ask us why we were, you know, changing it. We just wanted to change it and have our names and we're together, and he didn't make a big deal out of it, so...

DG: It's interesting. Did you—when you were going through the process, were you nervous that he might have feelings against same—

DW: Well, I think Peg thought maybe he might say something, but... You know, we had—we had a—a woman attorney who was—she was just a—you know, she was just right there with us, and I think the way she, you know, presented it—we had the papers and all this stuff. It just was ordinary, so that was good.

DG: Yeah, that is good. So—so you're officially married now. And all legal and everything. [laughs] So, talk a little bit about what that means for you. I mean, what's the difference as far as the legalities and—and those kinds of things for you?

DW: Well, I think, you know, because we have been together for 25 years, I—I think we've both thought, well, you know, what *will* it feel like? It certainly feels more secure that, you know, we have these—we have these legal rights and... you know, we have the power of attorney and we have this and that—legal papers that we've had for years, but... Now, we're married, and it's—it's, you know, that—that elevates those rights and it elevates those—the concerns that you have,

because you're not. I mean, you know, like if you go to a state that's not—where it's not legal yet that's a different story, but... you know, we filed joint tax returns for the first time in 25 years, and... You know, when we got married, and we had our friends here and—I mean, it just—it—you know, you kind of look at your relationship, and you look at the person you're with, and you think, "This is pretty special."

DG: When you talk about power of attorney and those kinds of legal papers, I was wondering if you would want to share about—I know you had an experience with a hospitalization where it was very difficult? Do you want to—is it ok to talk about that?

DW: Yeah, yeah. What happened was I had—when I worked at Shrewsbury [Pennsylvania], I, you know, went through town and got on 83 and went home when I worked three to eleven. And I stopped at this little convenience store to get something to drink, and I always put my seatbelt on, but I must've just not even realized that when I came back out with a drink that I didn't do it. And I went down the road and then turned on 83, and I don't remember anything else except waking up in the ambulance, and it was—I hit another car, somehow. And I woke up and I looked around, and I could see I was in an ambulance and I thought, "Oh man," and I knew I was in an ambulance because a couple weeks before that, one of the residents at Shrewsbury [Pennsylvania] where I worked, they were going—they were leaving just as we were leaving from work. They were going up to York hospital with us, so it's all lit up, you know, inside, and I could see inside. I was following 'em. I thought, "Oh my god, I'm not—" I said to them, "Am I dreaming?" And they said, "No." So, I had, I guess, hit the windshield, and my glasses came off, and you know, there were cuts in my head and stuff and I was unconscious. I did wake up in the ambulance and they called Peg, and she said did—she picked up the power of attorney and took it. So this would have been, well, like 15 years ago.

DG: So it would be before you were married? Before it was legal in Pennsylvania?

DW: Yeah, yeah. So she went in there, and we had, like, going—when you go to doctors, you know, who is your next of kin or who do we contact, and we had each other, and then we had these legal papers and she said that they just—they sent her back. They didn't give her a hard time. We certainly heard horror stories of where a couple would've been together forever and you know, they want a blood relative there, and... So that was, you know, the way it could've been. It went—luckily, you know, like if a nurse or a doctor or somebody would say, "Well, we don't count that. You can't come back," kind of thing would have been...

DG: Right, and that's just an added worry to a very difficult experience.

DW: Right, right, right. Yeah, so any time we travel, you know, we take that stuff just in case. And we've had. You know, we've had a dental emergency. We've had different things that, you know, you just—that's one less thing you have to worry about.

DG: So, you have grandchildren?

DW: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes. We have—our oldest will be 26 next month, and Mackenzie who is going to be 18 in May, and then Adam and Robby will be 13 and 11, and then of course, we're

going to have a great-great grandbaby. We don't know yet what, but we used to say we just love our grandkids. We used to say that their feet didn't touch the ground till they were about two, 'cause we held 'em and looked at 'em and held them the whole time. And I can remember when Jean lived outside Delta [Pennsylvania] when Mackenzie was born, and I would go from York [Pennsylvania] to Delta [Pennsylvania] to see Jean and Mackenzie and then I would rush off to work, and I'd stay as long as I possibly could and like literally run to the car so I could get there on time, but yeah—yeah, they're a lot of—you know, we've had 'em here and taken 'em places, and you know, we certainly enjoyed them.

DG: Is there anything else that you want to share?

DW: Well, I would just that—Peg said about that being a lesbian is a good life. It sure is. It sure is. It just... there's just things that—that a lesbian couple can count on each other and—and know the experience of being a woman and that kind of thing that, you know, just—just makes it easier to get through, like, everyday stuff.

DG: Well, thank you so much for your time.

DW: Oh, you're welcome.

DG: And sharing your story. I appreciate it.